

Al-Shura (42:1-53)

If I am reading [today's surah](#) correctly, there is a note of acceptance of other religions in what we read today. Here's what I am seeing:

- There is a continuity between the prophetic spirit that inspired Muhammad and that which spoke through the biblical prophets of old, from the religions typically called the "People of the Book" elsewhere in the Qur'an (42:3).
- The "commandment" that was given to Muhammad is the same one given to Noah, Abraham, and Jesus: "Uphold the faith and do not divide into factions within it." (42:13)
- God is the Lord of both groups (42:15)
- Both will be "gathered together" to a common destiny (42:15)
- Both have a common hope in the Last Hour (42:18)

That sounds like a generous inclusion based on a common faith even if we do not disagree on lesser specifics.

I am a committed Christian. I am fiercely devoted to a God who has made himself known to this world through Jesus Christ. I believe there is one God and this God alone is worthy of our devotion. I believe the proper response to the great grace of God shown through Jesus Christ is to live a righteous life showing love to God through purity and self-sacrifice and love to others through service and compassion.

So, am I an acceptable believer, as far as a devoted Muslim is concerned?

Musarhad says:

As Salamu Alaa Manittaba'al Huda

(Peace be upon him who follows the Guidance)

■ "So, am I an acceptable believer ..."

■ Of course not. A Jew is not a Christian even though he believes in 70-75 per cent of the Christian Bible. A Christian is not a Jew even though he believes in the entire Jewish Old Testament.

An Indian is not a British even though most of the Indian Law is British. Indian Constitution was drafted by Britain-educated Bhimrao Ambedkar. And even after withdrawal of British rulers from India in 1947, their laws continued to prevail in India. From time to time, that basic Code was amended. Still, a lot of similarity would be found in Indian and British Laws even today. Yet a British is not Indian and vice versa.

Reprimanding some perverted but misguided and misguiding knowledgeable men of the day, Allah says in the holy Quran (2:85):

"Do you, then, believe in 'some parts' of the Book, and disbelieve in 'others'?"

"So, what can be the punishment of those among you who do that, except disgrace in present life? And, on the Day of Judgement, they shall be turned to the most severe punishment."

☐ Now, some of the 'other' parts of the Book which have been glossed over while reaching the above conclusions are following:

► Surah 5, verse 17 says:

"Certainly, they are infidels who say "Allah is Masih, the son of Maryam". (Similarly in 5:72.)

► Surah 5, verse 48:

"We have sent down to you the Book with truth, confirming the Book before it, and a protector for it."

► Surah 5, verse 73 says:

"Surely, they are disbelievers who say God is one of the three (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)."

► Surah 18, verse 4 describes an attribute of the Quran:

(The Quran was revealed) ... "to warn those who have said that Allah has had a son."

► Kindly read the whole of Surah 112 consisting of just 4 verses:

"Say: The truth is that Allah is One. Allah is Besought of all, needing none. He is neither the father of anybody nor anybody's son. And none has ever been equal to Him."

[Note: At certain places, I have simplified the English translation taking utmost care to keep it closest to the original Arabic text while simplifying the English sentence. Other people who are not well-versed in the Arabic language, Quranic exegesis, Hadith, and all other allied sciences should never ever make this venture.]

■ Adam (peace be upon him) was the first prophet. The chain of prophethood continued till it was ended by the last and greatest of all messengers, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). There are some parts of the message these holy messengers through the ages brought, which never changed and can never change like the attributes of Allah, the events of the Hereafter, the descriptions of the Reckoning, Heaven, Hell, etc., the history of previous generations of people, etc. The other significant part of those messages consisted of rules and laws and they varied sometimes in some aspects according to the day, age and stage of human civilization, and also because of some other reasons. In 6:146, you will find a few things which were prohibited for Jews only because of a special circumstance.

Keep the above in mind, and you will understand the meaning of several verses. One more important thing is that Allah has revealed the Quran in Arabic and has taken upon himself its preservation. Because of that, even the language of Quran has remained preserved in the original form. So, we are not dependent wholly and solely upon a particular man's translation and rendering of the meanings of the Divine text.

► Though a non-Arab, I can directly check the original Arabic words and see for myself that in 42:3

كَذَٰلِكَ يُوحِي إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

"This is how Allah, the Mighty, the Wise, sends revelation to you and to those who were before you."

the comparison is being made in the manner of revelation, not in the text and subject-matter of revelation. The manner was same: Allah was the revealer, Archangel Gabriel was the transmitter, the respective prophets were the receivers, etc. But where did you get that the revealed texts were also same?

► 42:13

"He has ordained for you people the same religion as He had enjoined upon Nuh, and that which We have revealed to you (O prophet,) and that which We had enjoined upon Ibrahim and Musa and Isa by saying, Establish the religion, and be not divided therein."

Even a slight knowledge of Arabic would have taken the reader to the correct conclusion. In the absence of that knowledge, one must follow translations and commentaries of those who are well-versed in the science of Quranic exegesis and are also not blinded by any kind of prejudice. Yet, no translation can ever be equal to the original epitome of miracle, that the Arabic Quranic text is.

If you have patience, then read on my attempt to explain 42:13:

"He has ordained for you people (part of) the same religion (Arabic 'Deen') as"

The Arabic word is 'minadDeen' where 'min' indicates a part of something. So I have added "part of" in the translation. Mostly the translators omit this portion, because adding it in the translation adversely impacts the fluency and confuses the reader about the emphasized part of the sentence, etc. and the main subject of the statement. In Arabic sentence structure, these difficulties do not arise.

(i) The one He enjoined upon Nuh,

(ii) The one We revealed to you,

(iii) The one We enjoined upon Ibrahim, Musa and Isa.

All these three phrases are connected by the conjunction و (and), and they collectively are followed by 'an bayaanayah' (descriptive particle of 'an'). So, the description and explanation of the above three things taken together is : "Establish the religion ..."

The thing that is common in all the three is the command that the Prophets (and consequently their followers) must establish their respective religions, be steadfast upon them, etc.

Does this in any way indicate, that the religion (or more correctly the comprehensive and holistic 'Deen') revealed to all these prophets were the same? It only indicates that Allah commanded each of them to be committed to their respective religions.

► Coming to your interpretation of verses 42:15 and 42:18, I should say, in brief, I am just rendered dumbstruck and expressionless wondering how far a convoluted logic can go. And what magics one can perform just by quoting a statement out of the original context and then by camouflaging it in a context of one's own invention. Consider a few examples:

→ Example 1: "You are either one hundred percent with us or one hundred percent against us."

Explanation A:

There was an army general Richard Armitage who had suffered in some of his military expeditions on account of the cowardice of a few of his soldiers at some crucial junctures. So, in the current war, he said this to his soldiers, to separate out the coward and hesitant ones from the brave and determined. He called upon all the soldiers to look deep into their hearts and decide for themselves which category they belonged to. Even if there was a one per cent shortfall in their commitment to be with General Armitage in the war, they on account of their cowardice would be as harmful to the army as an outright enemy. Perhaps, even more. So, it would be in their own interest and in the interest of the entire nation that if they found themselves wavering in determination even to the slightest degree, they better got out of the expedition in the beginning stage itself. Thus the remaining army would be saved from the infection of cowardice.

Explanation B: (Just Google it and remember the mysterious 11th September, George Bush, B-52s, super-powerly arrogance, bullying, etc.)

→ Example 2: "Give me blood, I will give you freedom."

Explanation A:

A priest said this to the devotees who had been enslaved by a wicked demon. The priest wanted to make some human sacrifice to placate the deity. According to him, once human blood was offered to the deity, the deity would kill the demon and thousand will be able to live a life free of fear and terror.

Explanation B:

Indian militant commander, Subhash Chandra Bose, said to the Indian public to arouse him to accompany him in his fight against the British tyrants.

A quick reading of the verses before and after will make clear that Allah does not intend to offer options. He only makes it manifest and clear that the path of the holy Prophet and that of those unbelieving people are miles apart. So, there is no question of concurrence and as they have turned out deaf to all calls of reason, any argument would now be useless. Let all wait for the Day of Resurrection when Allah the Lord of all will uphold the Truth and reject the Falsehood. But alas! it will be too late. The time for change of course and mending of ways will have been over.

► To summarize, it's "a word of Truth misused for an evil purpose." (-- Hazrat Ali. Refer Muslim: 1774)